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ABSTRACT

CAIN is the computer cataloging and indexing system of the National Agricultural Library, a collection of information on agriculture and its related technologies. In this report is described the structure of the CAIN system and the various uses of the CAIN data bases. (WH)

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CAIN AND ITS USERS

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Madam Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to have this opportunity to be with you and to talk about CAIN.

The National Agricultural Library has the largest collection in the world of information on agriculture and its related technologies, and it is in many languages. In order to make this wealth of vital information more readily accessible to researchers, other libraries and agribusiness itself, efforts were started in the 1960's to put this data in machine-readable form. Toward the end of 1967 we were publishing the Pesticides Documentation Bulletin. In January 1970 the scope was expanded to include the full spectrum of data within our field of interest. This was done through our powerful and versatile CAIN System.

Let me start by assuming that a few of you do not know exactly what CAIN is, although you may have heard the term bandied around and have a vague feeling that it concerns the National Agricultural Library.

For those of you who have not read the article in the March 1972 issue of the Journal of Library Automation, if you divide the term in half, the "CA" stands for cataloging, and

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the "IN" stands for indexing. CAIN is, in fact, a comprehensive and sophisticated computer system which processes cataloging and indexing data for the National Agricultural Library. It is therefore, natural for people to refer to this NAL bibliographic data base as the CAIN data base, and in this may lie some ambiguity.

Who was it who said that if you build a better mouse trap, the world will beat a path to your door? And CAIN has become a pretty good "mouse trap". Because CAIN produces multiple types of attractive and useful output from a single input, quite a few other USDA organizations are using this computer system for their own data bases. One of the first was the herbicides data base of the Agricultural Research Service, followed by the International Tree Disease Register of the Forest Service. There has been no activity on either of these for some time but the old files are still retained. More current users are the American Agricultural Economics Association, the USDA Office of Communication which publishes a list of available USDA publications, the USDA Office of Automated Data Systems which has six compatible data bases on the CAIN System, the Food and Nutrition Center and the Economics Research Service which is studying the use of CAIN for their thesaurus data base.

The exciting part of this is that whenever you get multiple data bases in a compatible format, there is the possibility of information interchange. This is indeed

what happened when the Food and Nutrition data base was added to the NAL CAIN tapes. Now the CAIN purchasers get two for the price of one, a bargain in any language. The agricultural economics data is available on a separate tape but has not yet been merged into the NAL base.

There are several types of users of NAL's CAIN data base. There is first and foremost, of course, NAL itself, with its many internal working tools, over 20 card catalogs, and the monthly book catalog. A second type of user includes those who purchase our monthly tapes and use them for SDI current awareness searching and retrospective full searches. These reach as far out as Sweden, Norway, Canada and the Netherlands, in addition to organizations in the United States. The Universities of Georgia, Florida, and California do such searches for their own people. In addition, the first two also provide such services to all comers on a subscriber basis. Another user, the Macmillan Publishing Company, publishes the Bibliography of Agriculture, a commercial product, from this tape.

Our latest innovation is that last year CAIN went on-line. Two companies, Lockheed Missile Research of Palo Alto, California, and Systems Development Corporation of Santa Monica, California, are offering the NAL CAIN data base in an on-line mode. Both of these companies have booths here at ASIS and will be glad to discuss it further with anyone interested. The approach in this case has been a free text capability with truncation of terms if desired.

The on-line base can be searched on many data elements such as title, abstract, authors, call number, document type, language, journal abbreviation (on articles), date of publication, type of document, and so forth. It is equally useful both on single, narrow searches and on full bibliographies with computer printed output promptly available. The service is available both in the United States and Europe.

Because this is a commercial service and not controlled or monitored by us, we at NAL have no real knowledge of how many organizations -- or who -- are using the data base. We feel sure that it must be quite a number as the companies are in business to make a profit and they would not continue to offer the service if it was not used. We also infer from the number of letters, questions, evaluation studies and casual comments that our users must be a substantial number. We are in a similar position to that of LC with their MARC tapes. One of their users is the Ohio College Library Center, or OCLC. LC has no way of knowing how many of the organizations on that system are using the MARC data.

This brings me to the fact that CAIN is also a user as well as a provider. The National Agricultural Library is one of the Washington Federal group which is using the OCLC System. We are different from other users in one respect. Whereas most users receive only catalog cards from that system, we receive our records on MARC-type tape which is

fed into CAIN. This gives us the advantage of CAIN's whole broad spectrum of products -- catalog cards, bibliographies, book catalogs, internal reports, etc. -- and continues to make information in our specific area of interest available to all CAIN users.

There is a saying in the ADP world that if you stand still, you have already fallen behind. The rapidly changing technology today means constant new opportunities for expansion. At NAL, we have continued to plan for expanding CAIN's usefulness in several ways. Although CAIN itself is basically a batch type of system, its data entry function is on line through intelligent CRT terminals. Interface is now being developed between CAIN and STAR which is our automated serial titles data base. We also continue to work toward fuller interchange within the international network for agricultural information known as AGRIS. We hope to enter our CAIN data base retrospective to January 1970 into OCLC to give us a larger base for pre-selection searches and to take advantage of OCLC's union list feature so that other libraries will have a better source on interlibrary loan.

At NAL we are taking advantage of new computer technologies to support and extend the old, and still sound, policies of personal services. In the new technologies we find hope of expanding our service without loss of integrity or quality

under the Federal retrenchment needs. Moreover, we find the new technologies to be not only faster and more accurate than the old full scale manual approach but also more exciting. Even more exciting is the knowledge that so many other forward thinking libraries are joining the march toward cooperative sharing of a centralized data base. The National Agricultural Library is happy to be an active part in this wave of the future.

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